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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [PGOV](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: Egypt: H5N1 Update - February 2010

11. (SBU) Key Points

--Egypt's Ministry of Health (MoH) has confirmed 12 human cases of H5N1 (avian influenza) in 2010, with three fatalities.

--In the wake of efforts to combat H1N1 (swine flu), MoH will increase its public awareness H5N1 influenza programs for health care providers to ensure they remain vigilant in detecting avian influenza.

--MoH is exploring the possibility of testing deceased H1N1 (swine flu) cases for the H5N1 virus.

12. (SBU) Ministry of Health (MoH) Executive Director for Disease Surveillance Dr. Samir Refaey told ESTH officer on February 10 that Egypt has confirmed 10 H5N1 human cases this year - four in January and six so far in for February (two more cases were announced on February 20, bringing the current total to 12 cases). The most recent avian influenza fatality occurred on February 10th, the third for 2010. Noting the recent spate of H5N1 cases, he pointed out that during the same time frame in 2009 (January and February), Egypt reported 17 avian influenza cases and that the MoH expected the increase for the winter season. Egypt is the only country to have confirmed human H5N1 cases in 2010.

13. (SBU) Refaey expressed concern with the increasing amount of time taking avian influenza patients to seek treatment in hospitals after the onset of virus-like symptoms (the majority of this year's cases have taken more than four days from the beginning of symptoms to hospitalization). He speculated that following the intense focus on H1N1 throughout most of 2009, many private care facilities - where H5N1 patients initially visit - were not screening for avian influenza. MoH also suspects that patients have not been forthcoming in discussing their medical history, especially about their exposure to poultry - an automatic indicator to check for the avian influenza virus. In response to ESTH officer's inquiry about the growing number of adults contracting the virus this year (compared to 2009, when children 0-10 years old were the main victims), Refaey stated the MoH was aware of this development but did not have any definitive answer at this point. Refaey admitted that for many health care providers, H1N1 may have supplanted H5N1 as the most worrisome influenza strain circulating across the country.

14. (SBU) To respond to the growing number of H5N1 cases, MoH plans to revitalize its public awareness programs for health care providers - doctors, nurses, technicians - to ensure they quickly identify and treat avian influenza cases. Refaey asserted that surveillance and detection programs may have grown "fatigued" from battling H1N1 but MoH would redistribute information and lead training sessions to re-emphasize H5N1's status as a national priority. He also highlighted a recently announced MoH plan to test all severe cases of pneumonia in rural areas - where many H5N1 cases emerge - for both H1N1 and H5N1. Pneumonia is a respiratory condition that normally afflicts H5N1 patients. Increased testing for pneumonia may lead to improved detection for avian influenza cases.

15. (SBU) Egypt has confirmed approximately 270 H1N1 deaths since the virus first appeared last year in 2009. Refaey stated that MoH plans to begin testing all of the victims for H5N1 but did not provide details as to when this might begin. The potential intermingling of H5N1 and H1N1 is one of MoH's greatest health concerns.

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